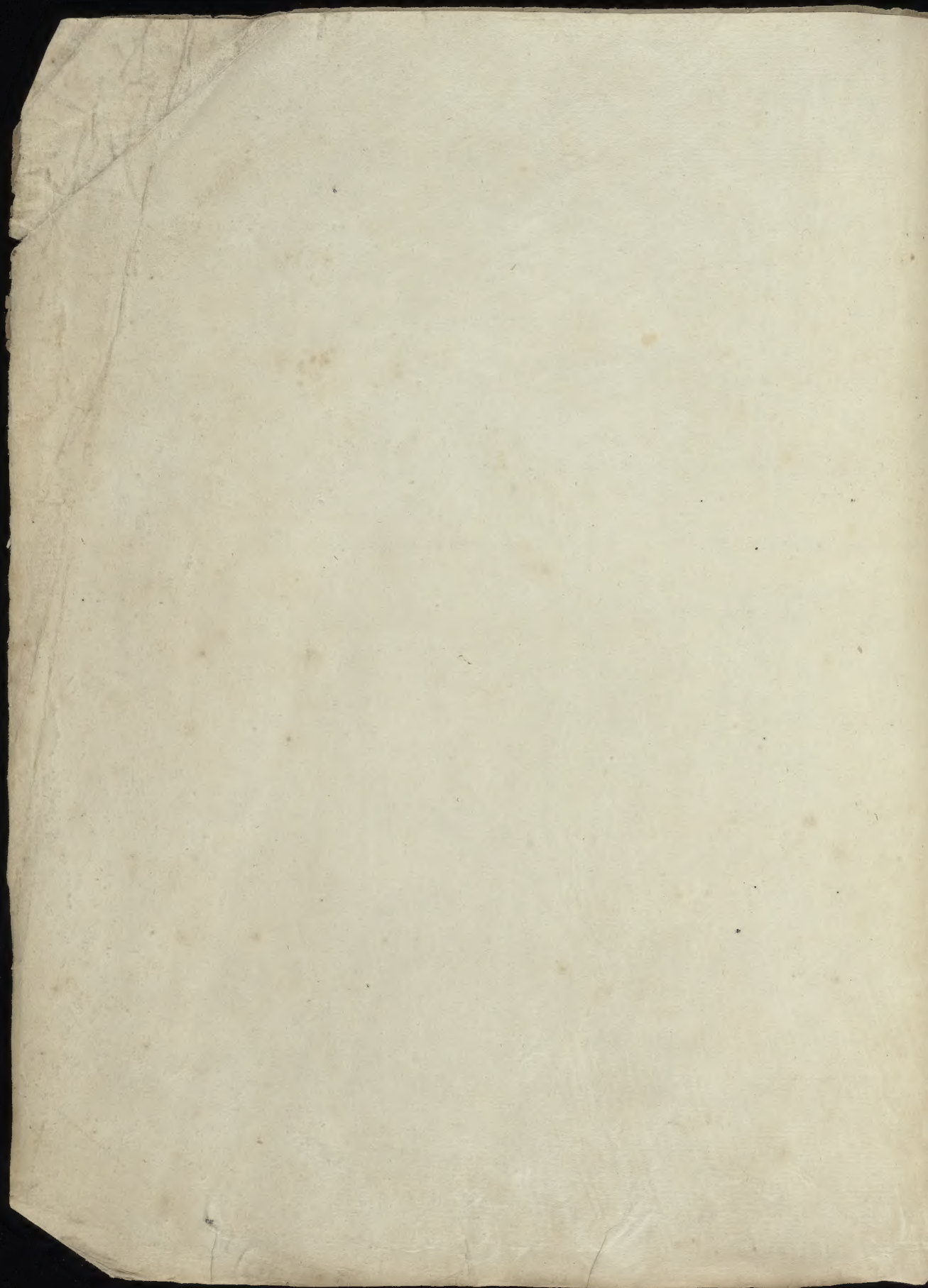


PLAN AND VIEWS
OF
THE ABBEY ROYAL
OF
ST. DENYS.

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PLANS AND VIEWS

The Abbey Royal of St. Edmund

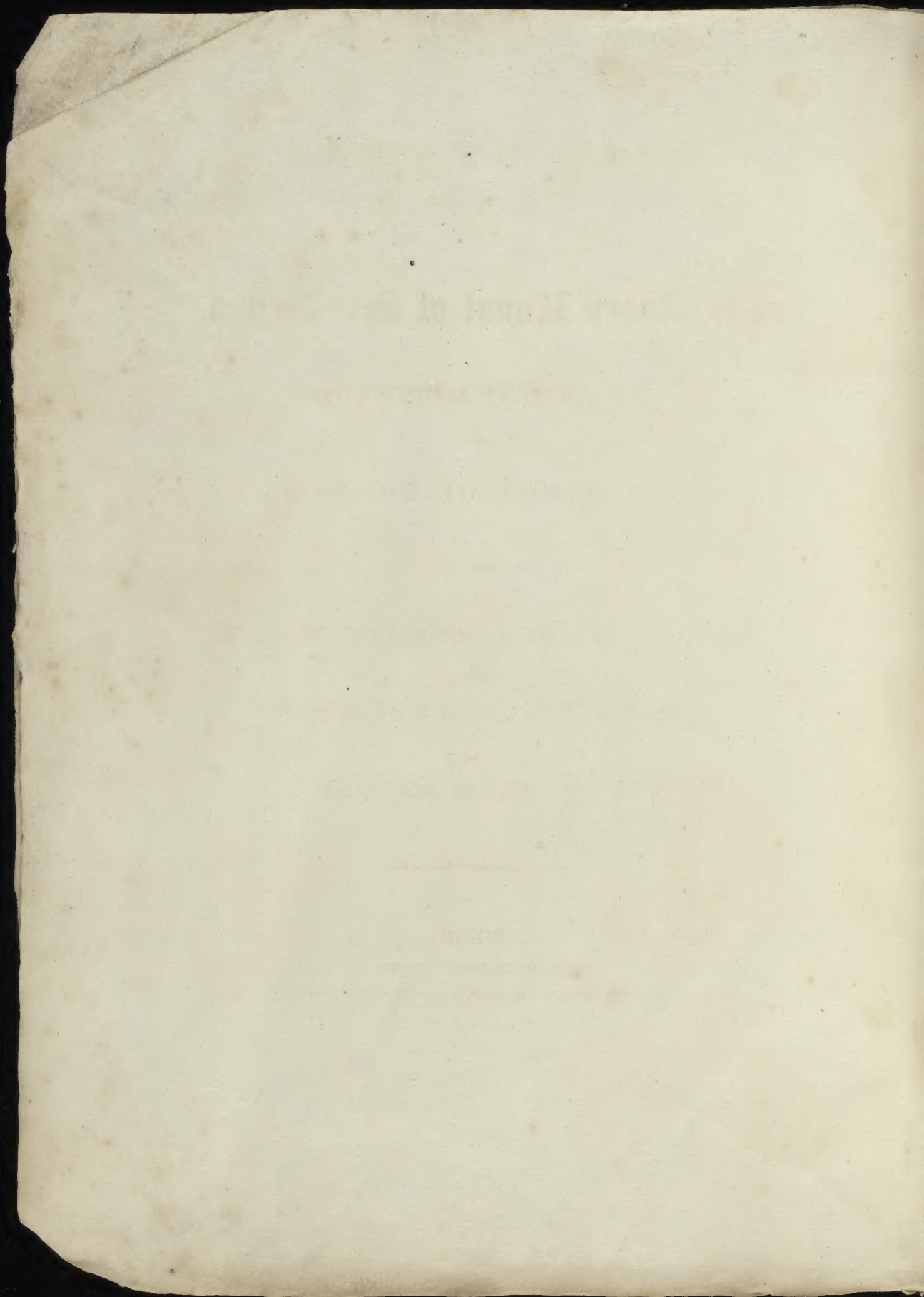
THE ANCIENT AND MODERN

THE MONASTERY OF

DESIGNED BY SIR JOHN NICHOLS

ENGRAVED BY JAMES WATSON

AT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



PLAN AND VIEWS
OF
The Abbey Royal of St. Denys,
THE ANCIENT MAUSOLEUM
OF
THE KINGS OF FRANCE.

ENGRAVED ON SIX PLATES BY B. HOWLETT,

FROM
DRAWINGS BY MAJOR G. ANDERSON.

WITH
AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY J. TAYLOR,
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1812.

PLAN AND VIEWS

The Abbey House of St. John

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P R E F A C E.

AT a period when the ancient architecture of this country is again fast approaching into vogue, and becoming the fashion of the day, it is hoped the following Engravings of the Abbey Royal of St. Denys, the ancient mausoleum of the Kings of France, made from views taken on the spot, may be acceptable, not only to many who have not had an opportunity of seeing that once most magnificent pile; but to some connoisseurs and antiquarians, who, though they may have seen it, perhaps had not either time or opportunity to reduce it so accurately to paper. There is also another apology which may be urged and brought forward for its introduction to the notice of the British public, which is, that as it has been built at various periods, beginning with the earliest years after the conversion of the Gauls to the Christian faith, it will be found to afford most excellent comparative examples for this country, of the different species of architecture that were then introduced and practised there, after the destruction of the Roman empire; I mean the degenerated Roman, or what we call in this country the Saxon style; and the vulgarly called Gothic, or the pointed style of England.

It may also be compared to Dunstable Priory, as furnishing examples of every species of architecture practised there,

from the fall and destruction of the Roman empire, until the Revolution of France in the year 1792.

It must further be observed, that the Abbey of St. Denys being the burial place, for a long series of years, of the Royal Family of France, felt the full force of the democratic spirit in the early period of the revolution; and at the time when these drawings were made, this noble pile was most lamentably despoiled of its ancient splendour of stained glass windows, monuments, and of its architectural ornaments; it is therefore to be presumed, that accurate representations of it cannot fail to be particularly interesting to the learned inquirer into the history of the origin and progress of that style of architecture, in which our ancestors so much excelled.

It may be interesting also to state, that the Abbey of St. Denys is now undergoing a complete repair, and is destined to be the burial place of the present dynasty of France.

THE
ABBEY ROYAL OF ST. DENYS.

THE antiquity of the Abbey of St. Denys, its prerogatives, the magnificence of its Church, the ashes of the Kings of France, as well as the illustrious men it contained, the celebrated actions that have happened there, but above all, its late melancholy fate and catastrophe, sufficiently justify its introduction to the public notice of this country.

It will be seen in the course of this concise account of it, there never has been an Abbey more favoured, more cherished by its Kings. The glory of its foundation was the martyrdom of the Apostle of the Gauls; and such has been the veneration of all posterity for this holy place, that God was willing to render it still more so, by the wonderful miracles that have been performed here in the earliest ages of the Church of France.

In the infant years of Christianity, St. Denys came to Paris to preach the gospel to the pagan Gauls; and, as might be expected, he met with much opposition to his new tenets; and because that he made many converts to the faith of Christ, they persecuted him and his companions, St. Rustique and St. Eleuthere. At length they suffered martyrdom in the cause of the faith of Christ, by being beheaded.

The authors of the same acts, it is also said, after that they were beheaded, fearing that the Christians would come and take up the bodies of the holy martyrs, commanded them to be thrown into the river Seine. A lady named Catulle, who, although a Pagan, touched with pity for their sufferings and fate, gave an entertainment to the persecutors of the holy saints; and whilst that she entertained them, she ordered her servants to go and take up the bodies, and interred them in or near the spot where the Abbey of St. Denys now stands, six miles from Paris: herself becoming of the new faith, built a monument over the holy apostles. Such was the original foundation of the Abbey of St. Denys, about the year 350.

It is said that St. Denys erected a church to Christ himself; and this church falling into decay, was rebuilt by St. Genevieve, about the year 500. About 629, Dagobert imitated the zeal and religion of his ancestors; and although it is not so well confirmed, yet there remains but little doubt it was he who rebuilt the church.

The principal object of the piety of this King was St. Denys, whom he chose for the protector of his person and estates; and he commenced the rebuilding of the church in such a style, as to merit the admiration of succeeding generations. According to the description of a Monk, and after him of Aimoin, nothing was spared in the construction of this new church, the most august that had appeared in the kingdom at that time. It had a great number of pillars of marble, and ornamented with the same; in short, neither expense nor art was wanting, that was possible to imagine, to make it superior to all the fabrics of the land.

It was in the plenitude of the riches of Dagobert, that he caused the magnificent tomb of St. Denys to be constructed, and the superintendence of the work was given to St. Eloy, abbot at that time; he was the great favourite at court, not

only for his virtues, but also for his abilities in the arts and sciences. St. Denys was one of the saints of France, St. Eloy most revered. With regard to the tomb St. Eloy built, or superintended, St. Owen, a cotemporary historian, says, (and he has given us a full and particular description of it), it was elevated like a little dome upon pillars, all of marble; the front was very rich, and shone with precious stones; the altar, which stood at the foot of the holy martyr, was surrounded with a boiserie of leaves of gold, from which hung a quantity of little apples mixed with pearls; the whole of the altar was covered with silver; as also were some other parts of the church covered with the same metal: in a word, the beauteous disposition of all the parts of the edifice was such as to exceed all the churches of the kingdom. The anonymous monk who has given this description, says, that Dagobert caused the translation of the relics of St. Denys, and his companions, St. Rustique and St. Eleuthere, the 10th of May, the day which the church of Paris celebrated the feast of the raising the same martyrs. It is even related, that such was the regard of Dagobert for the holy martyrs, that he covered the church itself with silver.

In the year 638, Dagobert died at Epernay, and was buried in St. Denys.

About the year 774, King Pepin rebuilt the Church anew, under the inspection of Abbot Fulrad, and his son Charlemagne continued the work in greater splendour, if possible, than ever; the new building was completely finished, and Charlemagne himself assisted at the dedication thereof, which was in the month of February, 775. The crypt of this building yet remains in fine preservation; the arches are what we call Saxon, and the capitals of the pillars bear a great resemblance to those of the Deanery, Christ Church, Oxford. Vide Carter's Antient English Architecture.

About 846 to 865, the Abbey of St. Denys suffered severely from the Pagan Normans. In 912, Charles King of France offered his daughter Giselle in marriage, with all the country between Epli and Bretagne, if he would become Christian, which was accepted; and here ended the misfortunes of St. Denys, until the late revolution.

The church erected by Pepin and Charlemagne, upon the foundation of Dagobert's church, being found to be too small to contain the crowds of people who came on the grand solemn festivals, caused the Abbot Segur to think of enlarging it, which he began at the west end. He repaired the towers, much decayed by time; he raised them higher, and run a parapet round the upper part of them, both for ornament as well as defence. This part of the church being done, he was encouraged to go on; he began the east end, called the Chevet, which King Louis VII. honoured by his presence, and laid the first stone, going into the foundations himself. June, 1140, the King sung the 84th Psalm, *Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis*; many bishops were present on the occasion.

According to William de Nangles, and another author of the same time, Eudes Clement undertook again to rebuild the church, which was going fast to decay. With pain he undertook so grand a design, persuaded that his church had been dedicated by Jesus Christ: this consideration prevented him from touching it; but others, more enlightened, easily set aside such frivolous scruples. King Louis, and Queen Blanche his mother, were the first to encourage him in this enterprize; and, it is beyond all doubt, they contributed a great part of the expense. The arms of Castile are to be seen in various parts of this new work, joined to that of France. This new work was carried on by Mathew de Vendosme, and finished 1282. Having now brought down the last addition to the

building, we shall give a brief account of the several Kings buried in this Abbey.

On one side of the great altar was the tomb of Dagobert, the founder; near to that Pepin, the father of Charlemagne; Louis III.; a little above, Philip III. called the bold; Philip IV.; next, Philip Auguste; Louis VII. or St. Louis. It is worthy of remark, that they brought the body of this holy king from Paris to St. Denys, and they built at every place where the body rested crosses: these crosses were called Montjoys.

Near the Abbot's throne was the tomb of Clovis. It was this prince who took the silver off the church which Dagobert covered it with, to give to the necessitous poor. The tomb of Charles Martel was near that of Clovis. On the other side of the choir were those of Eudes and Hugues Capet; in the middle, that of Charles II. called the Bald. In the choir are buried, without tombs, Clotaire III. and IV.; Thierre II.; Childeric, and Louis V. Leaving the choir, is that of Louis X.; Robert; Henry I.; Louis VI. called Le Gros; Philip le Jeune, and Charles VIII.; Philip le Longue; Charles IV.; Philip VI. Valois; John. In the middle of the chapel, to the south, were those of Charles V. called Le Sage, and Charles VII. and near this chapel the mausoleum of Francis; near the chapel of Notre Dame la Blanch, was that of Louis XII.; near the mausoleum of Louis XI. was the chapel Catharine de Medicis: built over the tomb of her husband, Henry II. In the souterrain, or crypt of this edifice, were buried Francis II. Charles IX. Henry III. Henry IV. Louis XIII. XIV, and lastly, the XVth, besides innumerable of the higher orders of nobility.

With regard to the treasury, no church in Europe possessed such immense riches, until the revolution; but now, alas! it is demolished and robbed of all its sacred monuments and

treasure; the beautiful stained glass windows, one of its greatest ornaments, broke to pieces, and the roof now in so bad a condition, that it may be daily expected to fall in. Such is the deplorable state of the once magnificent royal Abbey of St. Denys.

We shall conclude this account with its several dimensions, conceiving the plates themselves will be sufficient to point out, to those conversant in church architecture, the different periods when it was built. Total length inside 330 feet, breadth of the nave 90 feet, height of the nave 90 feet.

Note, with regard to the antiquity of the pointed arch, being in France before this country, Mr. Whittington says, our belief must be considerably shaken, when he adduces the Church of St. Denys being built about 1144, an earlier instance than can be adduced in this country. I will not contend, as many others have done, about St. Cross; I shall refer them to Malmesbury Abbey, where I think will be seen an indubitable earlier instance. Neither can I acquiesce with the Reverend Gentleman, when he so decidedly gives the preference to the French cathedrals.

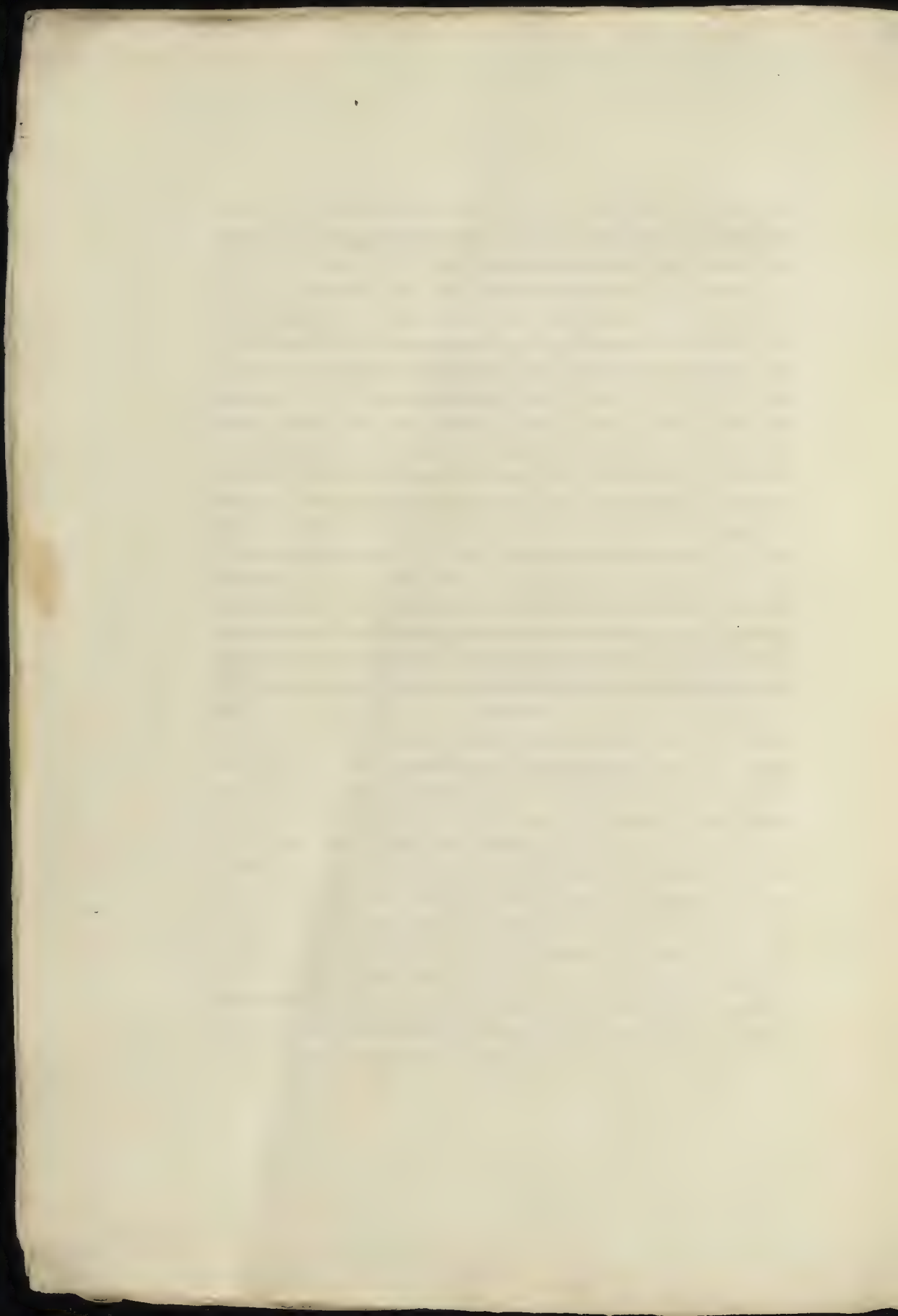
The English traveller, when he visits France, is no doubt much struck with the blaze of beauty produced by their cathedrals, and very naturally so, because, in the first place, they were always kept cleaner, and in better repair and order than ours; and the striking effect produced by the evening sun through their most magnificent stained glass windows, with which ours certainly bear no comparison, so dazzles the eye, and intoxicates the mind, that at that moment he decidedly gives the preference against his own country: but let that instant glare of effect be a little faded by the declination of the sun, and he calmly reflects on the elegant proportion of the English cathedrals, notwithstanding their sufferings in the days of Oliver Cromwell, he will yield the

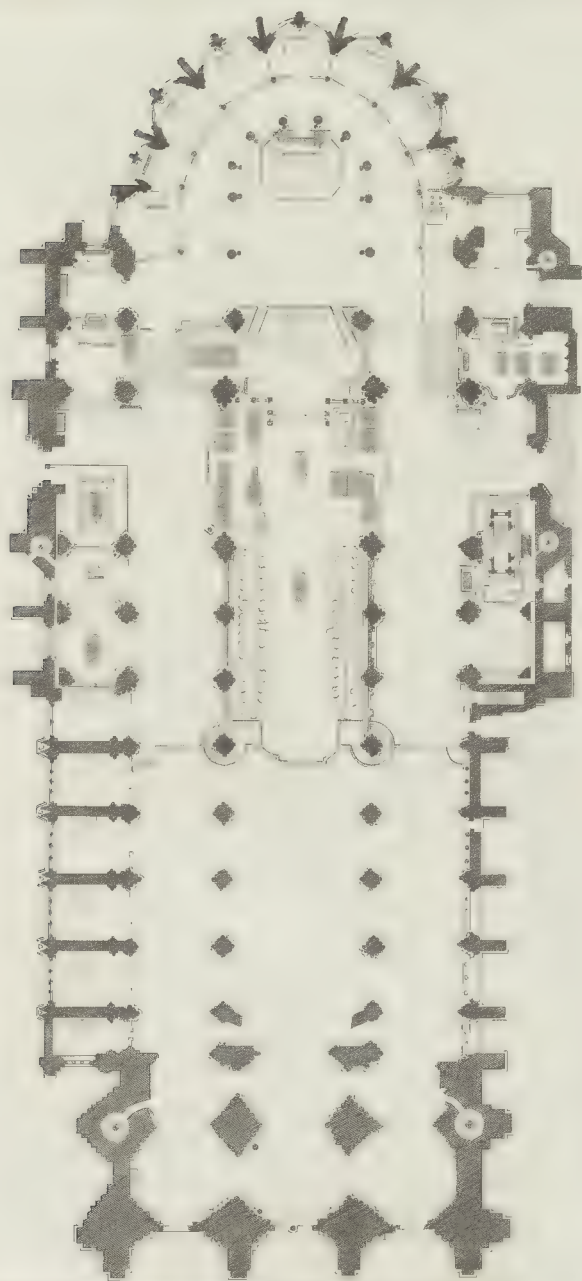
palm to England, by admitting, that although the former is decidedly the most richly dressed, the latter is unquestionably the most elegant and best proportioned.

There is one thing the Reverend Mr. W. has taken no notice of in the French cathedrals, and which I think a great defect; that is, they have no *centre tower*, and a cathedral without one is to me like a ship without a mainmast: again, their transepts are not sufficiently extended to be *proportionate*.* It perhaps may be a want of taste in me, to find fault with Rheims and Amiens; but they certainly appear to be out of all proportion: the middle aisle of both of them are nearly alike, 132 feet high by 36 wide: Let any one add 32 feet to the middle aisle of Westminster, which I think too high for its breadth, and it is nearly as broad as they are, and he will be convinced what is here observed is pretty correct. And further, if I may be permitted to make another observation relative to the façade of Rheims, it is, that those magnificent porches, which many admire, are overcharged with finery, and form no part of the original design, but are an after work, not corresponding with the general style of the building.

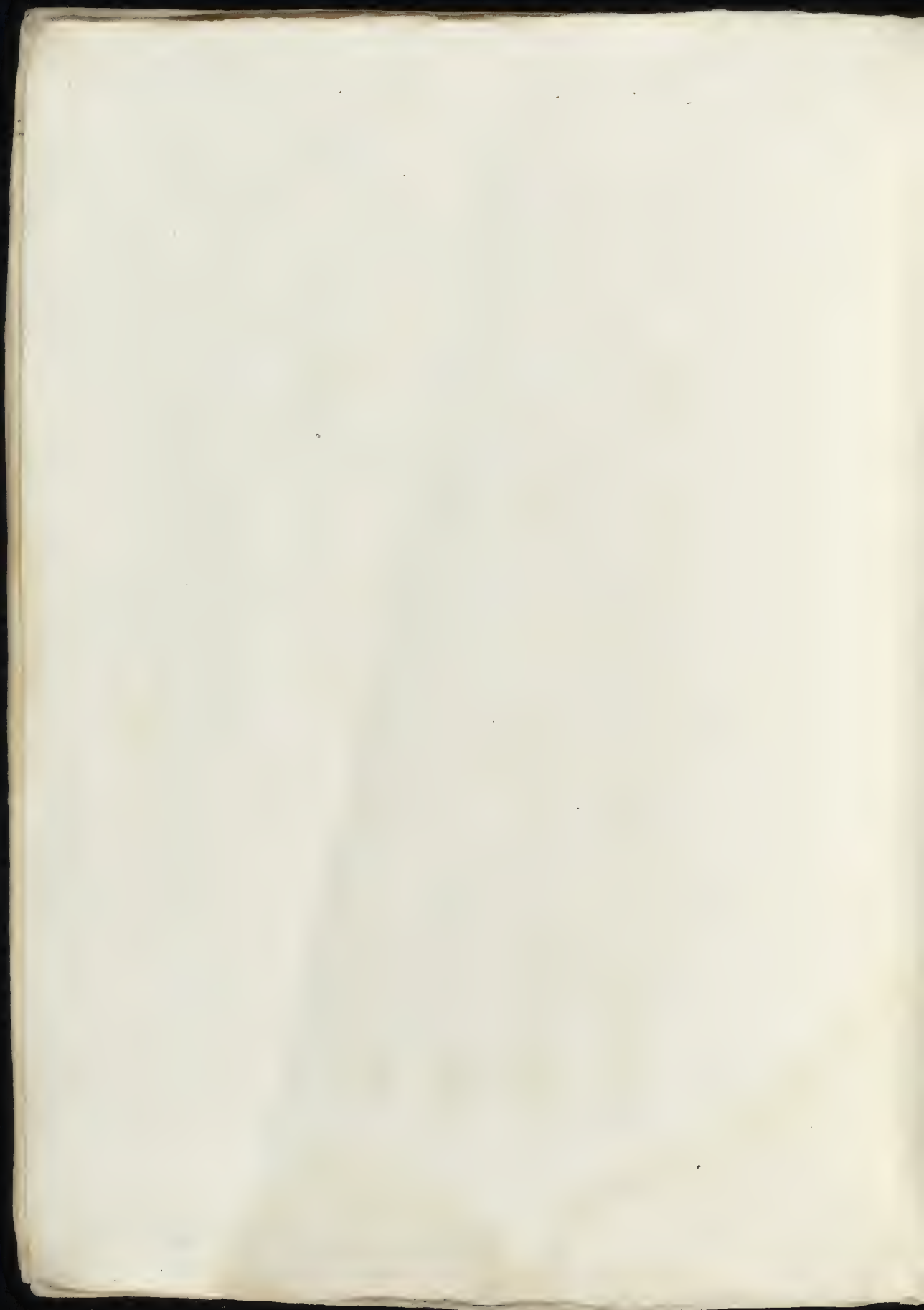
* Amiens, Rheims, Paris, Abbeville, &c.

THE END.



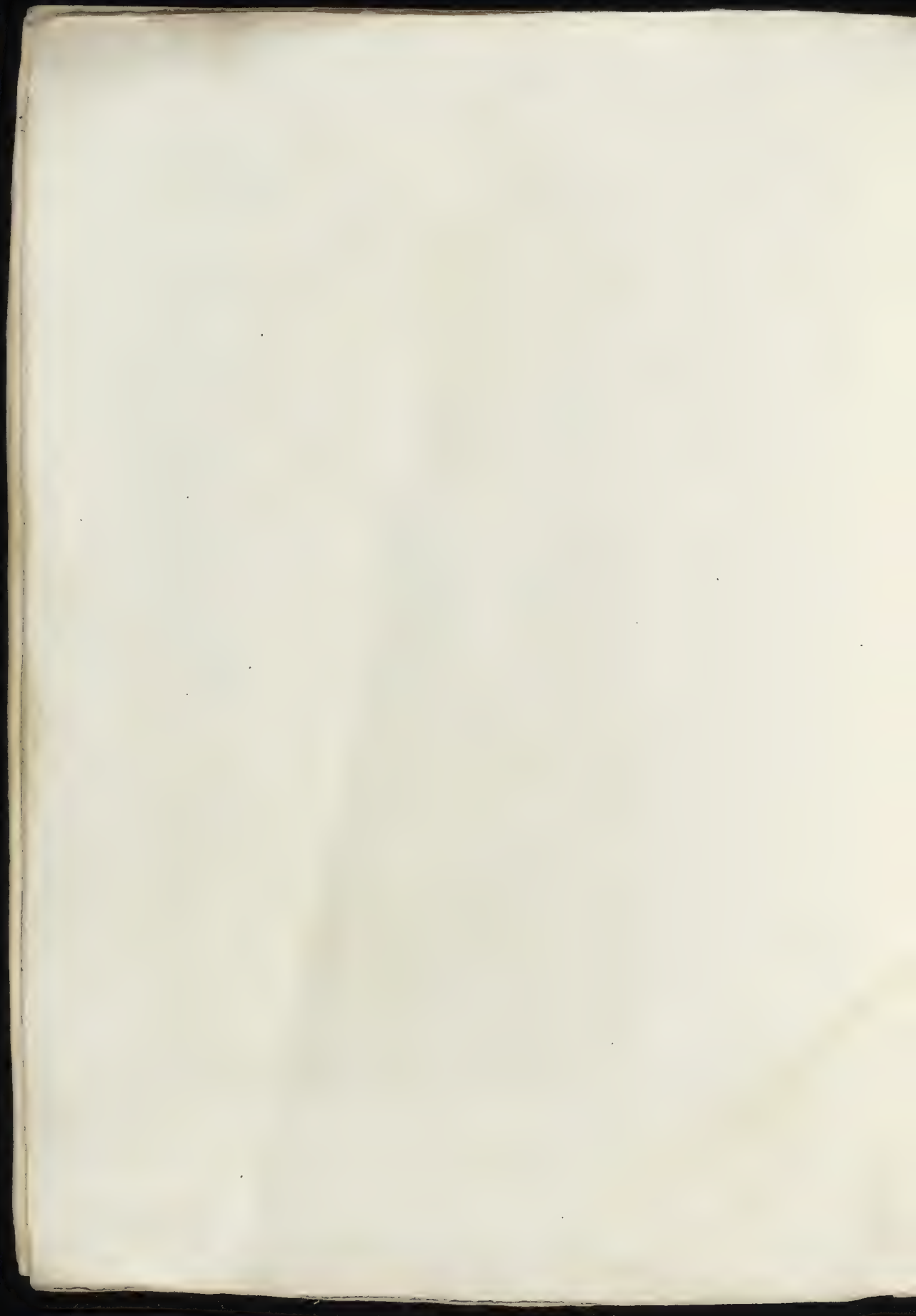


PLAN OF THE ABBEY OF SAINT DENIS.





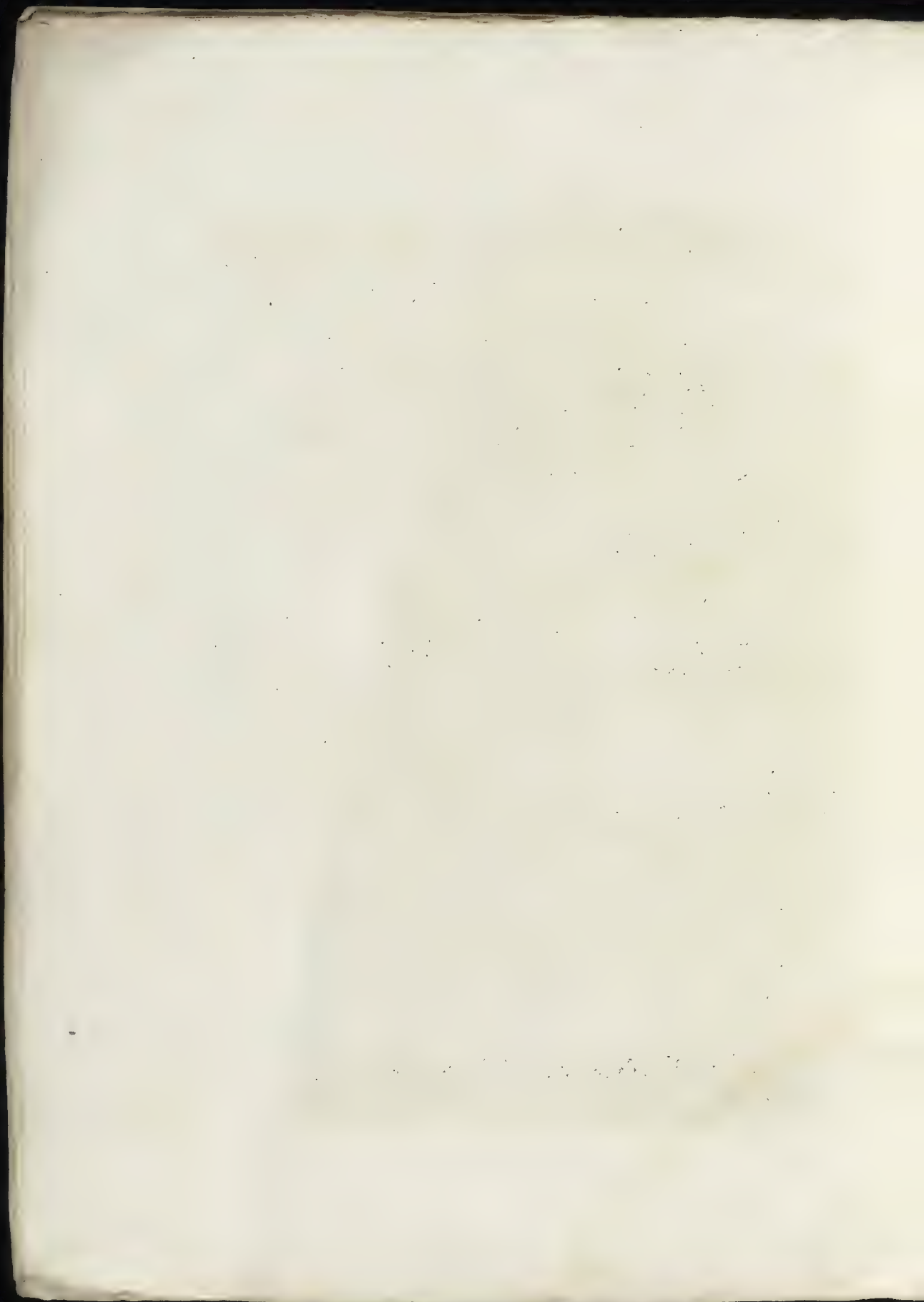
Front elevation of the church of St. John the Baptist, London.

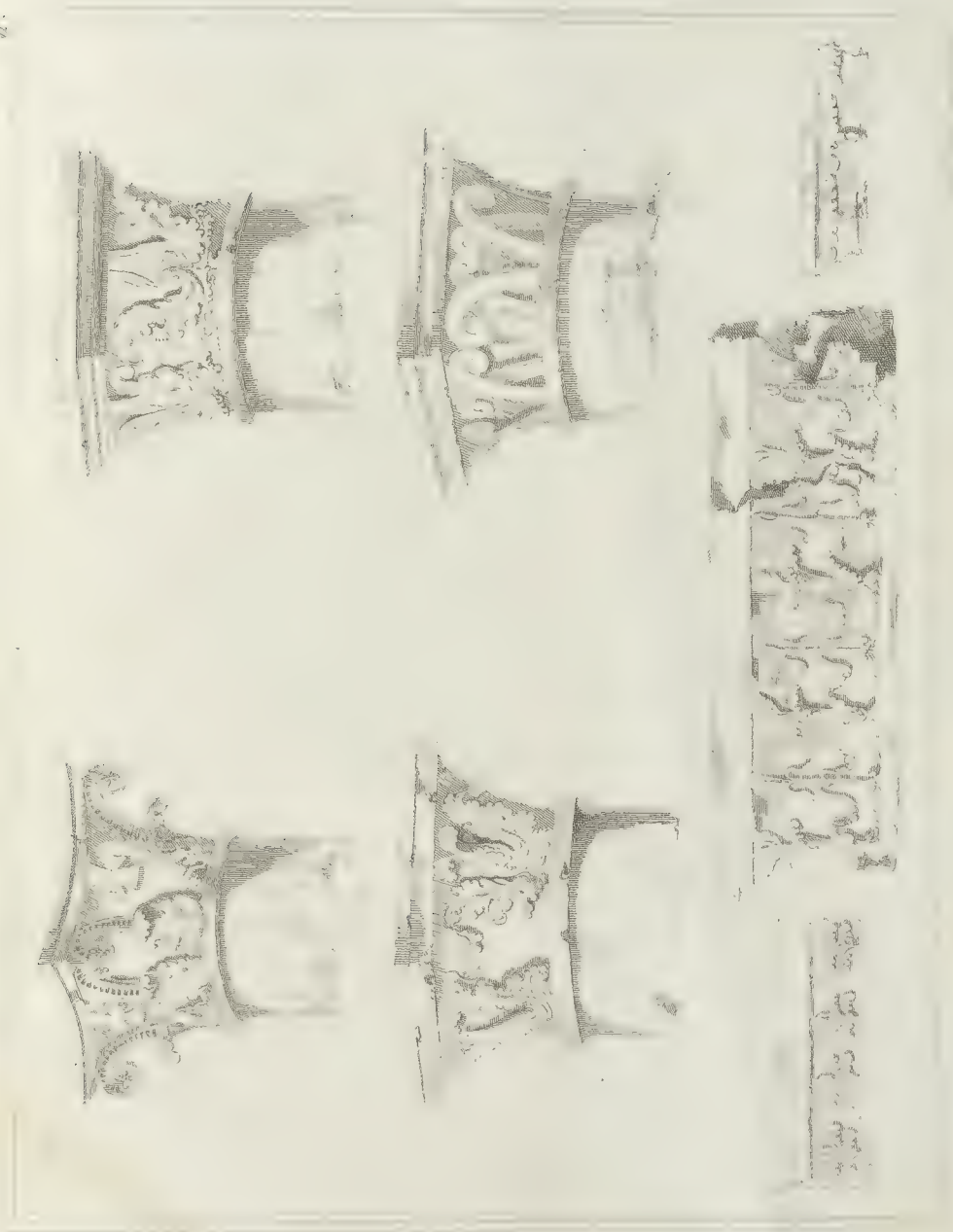












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